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SATURDAY LETTERS

SYMPATHY FOR A DEVIL

The hallmarks of Janice Arkatov's article and its subject, actor Gene Dynarski, are ignorance and insult ("Actor Dynarski Sees Another Side of Stalin," by Janice Arkatov, May 7).

For Arkatov's information, Stalin (real name—Iosif Dzhugashvili) did not have a drop of Slavic blood in him. The Soviet Union is composed of different republics, and over 100 nationalities, only a few of them are of Slavic origin. Stalin butchered people without any discrimination. Slavs, Jews, his Georgian fellow countrymen, even his foreign "comrades" who arrived to "help" the Soviet people, just like they come today to "help"

Joseph Stalin at a Moscow military parade, circa 1946.

the Nicaraguans, and support that country's regime.

As for Dynarski's remarks, well, they are extremely insulting. Dynarski is really invidious to myself, and other Russians, when he is saying that "there was a lot of justification for what he [Stalin] did." Should we, then, justify Hitler, Mao, the Sandinistas, Idi Amin, Castro, Mussolini and other ogres and oppressors?!

Stalin murdered more people than all his "comrades" put together, every Russian family, including mine, lost someone in the Soviet concentration camps. Stalin's legacy of jingoism and tyranny is alive and well in the Soviet Union, don't let all the hype about *glasnost* and hoopla about "democratization" fool you.

How can anyone draw a "largely sympathetic" portrait of Stalin? Lenin, his pupils Stalin and Mao—they evoke only memories of suffering and grief, not sympathy. When will the people of the Western World learn not to seek humane and human traits in Soviet dictators?

PAUL STONEHILL
Los Angeles

Dynarski's remarks concerning Joe Stalin go a long way toward confirming my opinion that actors, in general, should confine their public utterance to the lines written for them.

As to the "big break" he's waiting for, perhaps he can next give us a "sympathetic" portrayal of Stalin's only superior in mass murder, genocide and terror.

Does he remember who that was?

FRED SCIFERES
Inglewood

GIRLS & FUN

Regarding Patrick Goldstein's review of "The Allnighter," where was he when Cyndi Lauper was singing "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" ("Allnighter' a Fine Place to Snooze," May 4)?

By now it's *obvious*, without irreverence, bra-burning or embarrassment, that women can be smart, want careers and also desire romance.

But alas, when a woman makes a "sweet-souled beach blanket movie" about friendship and loyalty that includes "eye-catching surfing" and "Melrose Avenue fun," she's asked to be embarrassed.

When a male film reviewer presides over a critique with such a sexist sensibility, how embarrassing for male film makers like myself.

JOHN ARNOFF
Redondo Beach

McKELLEN'S BALANCE

In contrast to Maria Martinez's incorrect assumption that everyone in Ian McKellen's audience at the Westwood Playhouse was thoroughly familiar with Shakespeare (Calendar Letters, May 3), I found it delightful that McKellen struck a fine balance between over-assumption and over-explanation.

Those less familiar with Shakespeare's works were entertained and enlightened, while the more knowledgeable segment could not be bored except by their own inclination.

K. A. DRAPER
Anaheim

ROCK: DEAD & ALIVE

It saddens me to see Richard Meltzer wishing for what's past and not opening himself up to the great, unscrupulated bands that are making music today ("Meltzer, Rock Is Dead," by Kristine McKenna, April 26).

Bands like the Smiths, R.E.M., U2 and Simple Minds have large followings, yet have not changed their ideals and integrity to suit the mass market. These, including such lesser-known (but equally brilliant) acts as the Cocteau Twins, James, Woodentops, the Jazz Butcher and Husker Du, are the Dylans, Beatles and Rolling Stones of the '80s.

And there will be more new Dylans, Beatles and Rolling Stones in the '90s, 2000s, forever.

Meltzer may have to go a little further than his Top 40 radio to find this music, but the reward is well worth the search.

JESSICA WATSON
Garden Grove

I hate to admit it, but I couldn't agree with Meltzer more.

The industry, the critics, the media and the artists have established an auto-cannibalistic relationship that takes every bit of raw inspiration and refines it into a shiny, soulless mush.

The artists want to make it big—the media knows what the public wants; the critics are the "experts"; the industry knows just how to exploit these elements and turn this knowledge into big bucks.

The independent companies are kept "in line" by the radio and MTV people. What happened to the payola scandal? College radio is already formatted. Everyone knows everything everywhere all at the same time. The electronic media has become the perfect tool for the greedy fools who run this country. Rigidity through monotony. . . .

It seems the powers that be have always been able to turn youthful hopes and desires into cold, hard cash.

After being processed through this dream machine for nearly 30 years now, I feel dizzy. I've got one thing to hold on to. I still love to play the guitar.

You can't take that to the bank but then again I guess I really never liked banks.

PAUL B. CUTLER
(Musician)
Los Angeles

Please keep letters brief and include full name, address and phone number. Mail to Calendar Letters, Los Angeles Times, Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles 90053.

PERFORMANCE ART REVIEW

WONG'S TNR COMPANY AT JAPAN AMERICA THEATRE

By CHRIS PASLES,
Times Staff Writer

Two women gradually shuck the gauze cocoons they have wrapped themselves up in, step forward boldly and begin sowing imaginary seed, as if enacting American Indian rituals.

So ends performance artist Yen Lu Wong's two-act work "Shi-Me," which was given its premiere by Wong's company, TNR, Thursday at the Japan America Theatre.

It was one of the few memorable images in a diffuse, tedious and academic work, loaded with pretensions, from the incorporation of chic masks by Francoise Gilot to program notes announcing that what was taking place was no less than two "ceremonies."

Ostensibly celebrated were events of autobiography and, to quote the notes, "metabiography."

In Part 1, "Cicada Images, Moulting," meandering theatrical episodes were hung together on the slender narrative thread of a Chinese girl emerging from self-hatred generated by encounters with Western education and religion.

Often made up of long solos for Wong, the act began with a moth-like creature struggling to emerge from a stylized bamboo cage, traced images of school days/adolescence and ended with her ceremony of self-baptism after transcending a hated-loved Nun figure.

As a performer, Wong could make expressive use of face and voice. But only her upper torso, shoulders and arms conveyed any kinetic urgency, so she scarcely commanded the stage or proved interesting to watch for long.

Part 2, "Reincarnation Is Born in Memory," was more movement-oriented, with company members Carrie Chan, Gail Gustafson, Donna Sternberg, Adelaide Tolleson and Wong gracelessly depicting universal states of paralysis, struggle and rebirth. It began with the women wrenched backward in fighting unseen forces, passed into a darkened stage interlude, with phosphorescent effects, and ended with the seed-sowing ritual that alone stuck in the mind.

TODAY

MUSIC

PETER MACK (Ramo Auditorium, Caltech, (818) 356-4652): The Irish pianist makes his California debut in a program of music by Haydn, Beethoven, Janacek and Rachmaninoff. 8 p.m.

THE ROMEROS (Ambassador Auditorium, 300 W. Green St., Pasadena, (818) 304-6161): The guitar quartet plays music by Telemann, Bach and a number of Spanish composers. 8:30 p.m.

KRONOS QUARTET (Schoenberg Hall, UCLA, (213) 825-9261): The attention-grabbing new-music specialists play works of Revueltas, Schnittke and others. 8 p.m.

DANCE

LARRY HYMAN AND KATJA BIESANZ/DANCE THEATER (Brand Library, 1601 W. Mountain St., Glendale, (818) 956-2051): Two locally based choreographers present an evening of their own works. 7 p.m.

JOFFREY BALLET (Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Music Center, (213) 972-7647): The first of four performances of Ashton's "La Fille mal Gardee." 8 p.m. Also Sunday at 2 and 7:30 p.m. and Tuesday, 8 p.m.

POP/ROCK

REBA McENTIRE (Universal Amphitheatre, 100 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, (818) 980-9421): McEntire has been raking in the country music awards in recent years. Also: Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. 8:15 p.m. Also Sunday at Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre, 8800 Irvine Center Drive, Laguna Hills, (714) 855-6111. 8:15 p.m.

BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS, 5TH DIMENSION, CARL PERKINS, COUNTRY JOE McDONALD, JOLEEN BENOIT (City Hall, 200 N. Spring St., (213) 284-3284): This multi-band extravaganza salutes "Thank You Veterans Week." Noon.

JAMES COTTON, BIG TIME SARAH, SON SEALS, JERRY JUMONVILLE, BLUES FOR BREAKFAST (John Anson Ford Theatre, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, (213) 874-1343): A new blues festival has come to town. Noon. Also Sunday, with Albert Collins, Tom Ball & Kenny Sultan, William Clarke Band, Larry Davis, others.

RED LORRY YELLOW LORRY (Scream, Embassy Hotel, 851 S. Grand Ave. (213) 850-6600): This band from Leeds, England, plays dance music with ominous overtones. 10 p.m. Also: Winter Hours, Medicine Wheel.

STAGE

"BLIND STAB" (Sixon-Lee Gallery, 7525 Beverly Blvd., (213) 629-2205 or (213) 933-5282): Kedric Robin Wolfe presents his one-man theater work, accompanied by cellist Hans Christian. 8 p.m. Regular schedule: Saturday, 8 p.m. Ends May 30.

"CABARET" (Terrace Theatre, Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, (213) 432-7926 or (213) 480-3232): Arte Johnson is featured in the John Kander and Fred Ebb musical drama, presented by Long Beach Civic Light Opera. 8:30 p.m. Regular schedule: Wednesday-Saturday, 8:30 p.m.; mat. Saturday, Sunday, 2:30 p.m. Ends May 24.

"CALL ME MADAM" (Pasadena Civic Auditorium, 300 E. Green St., (213) 410-1062): Jo Anne Worley is featured in the California Music Theatre's production of Irving Berlin's musical spoof. 8

OPENINGS

Reba McEntire will headline at the Universal Amphitheatre.

Bonnie Raitt will join group in a benefit at Pan International.

p.m. Regular schedule: Tuesday-Saturday, 8 p.m.; mat. Saturday, Sunday, 2 p.m. Ends May 17.

"HANNA: QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND EARTH" (Pepperdine University, Smothers Theatre, 24255 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu, (818) 782-6500): Folklorist Diane Wolkstein in her performance based on the mythological tale of two lovers. 8 p.m.

"NEW FACES . . . BUT THEY'VE BEEN AROUND" (Blond Street Theatre, 301 Boyd St., (213) 629-2200): Three one-person theater performances: Paul Bob in "Everybody's Gotta Gun," Shelley Bonus in "The Transformation of Natalie Normal" and Pons Maar in "Natural Enemies." 8 p.m. Regular schedule: Saturday, Sunday, 8 p.m. Ends May 31.

"WHAT WILL TOMORROW BRING?" (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 1089 N. Oxford St., (213) 480-1803): A one-act drama by Joan Halmah Brooks dealing with nuclear war. 8 p.m. Also Sunday, 8 p.m. Free.

ART

"LIVING SPACES" (Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Temporary exhibition at 1544 Berkeley St., Santa Monica, (213) 276-0070): A single-family home is transformed into an exhibition space with installations by eight artists. Wednesday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Ends June 15.

TANDEM EXHIBITS (Koplin Gallery, 822½ Santa Monica Blvd., (213) 656-3378): Paintings and drawings by Tony Scherman, new paintings by Mark Wethli. Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Ends June 6.

SUNDAY

POP/ROCK

BONNIE RAITT, DAVID CROSBY, GRAHAM NASH (Pan International, 820 Lincoln Blvd., Venice, (213) 480-3232): Rock performers join in a benefit for COMADRES (Committee of Mothers of the Disappeared, Assassinated and Political Prisoners of El Salvador). 7:30 p.m.

JOHN BAYLEY (Club Zebra, Music Machine, 12220 W. Pico Blvd., (213) 820-8150): The Guyana-born singer and multi-instrumentalist heads a show spotlighting reggae from Colorado-based artists. Also: Little Women. 9 p.m.

"ABSOLUTELY AMAZING." TWO BIG THUMBS UP A GREAT FILM
"OUTRAGEOUS. GARY OLDMAN IS A WONDER. STUNNINGLY WELL ACTED BY VANESSA REDGRAVE AND ALFRED MOLINA."
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